



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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August 20, 2003

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

North Coquille DM/CT Environmental Assessment

OR125-03-06

I. Introduction

An interdisciplinary team for the North Coquille DM/CT project within the Umpqua Field Office, Coos Bay District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has analyzed two alternatives in the EA: a No Action alternative and a Proposed Action alternative.

The Proposed Action alternative would treat 30-60 year old stands of primarily Douglas-fir and western hemlock in the North Coquille subwatershed within LSR 261, Riparian Reserves, and adjacent GFMA land in the Moon Creek, Hudson Creek and Alder Creek drainages. The project would thin approximately 993 acres of primarily Douglas-fir stands. About 709 acres would receive density management thinning (DMT) in Riparian Reserves (RR) and Late-successional Reserves (LSR). About 284 acres would receive commercial thinning (CT) in the General Forest Management Area (GFMA). Dense stands would be thinned from below to leave approximately 60-80 stems per acre by removing primarily the suppressed, intermediate, and smaller co-dominant conifers. Dominant and larger co-dominant conifers would be retained. Individual and patches of red alder would either be cut, left uncut or thinned depending on the unit conditions and stand prescription. Alder stands with only a minor component of conifer, approximately 61 acres, would be converted back to conifer through a combination of regeneration harvest of red alder patches, and cutting alders from around releasable conifers. All trees within the variable-width streamside protection strips would be retained. The proposed treatments of the units inside the LSR are designed to restore landscape level patterns observed on historical aerial photos through a combination of different thinning densities and selective retention of red alders based on topographic patterns.

Harvest would be accomplished with a combination of skyline cable, ground based cut-to-length, and helicopter logging equipment depending on road access, steepness of the terrain, and environmental impacts.

New road construction, approximately 1.0 mile, would consist of either temporary roads or semi-permanent roads depending on the time needed to accomplish management objectives such as slash disposal. Road renovation would consist of brushing, grading, and providing adequate drainage to older existing roads. Road improvement would consist of capital improvements such as placing rock surfacing on existing dirt roads or adding culverts. Roads no longer needed for management or that may have erosion potential would be closed or decommissioned. The estimated road closures after completion of the project is 7.4 miles which includes 1.4 miles in the Tier 1 Upper North Fork Coquille drainage.

Snag and down log creation, and in-stream restoration projects would be accomplished where needed to benefit fish and wildlife.

The project would be funded by the sale of excess trees removed from the stands in timber sales tentatively planned for FY 2004.

The No Action alternative would defer action on the forest stands proposed for treatment. The project analyzed in the EA is located in Sections 7,8,16,17,19 and 30 of T. 26 S., R. 10 W., and in Section 25 of T. 26 S., R. 11 W. Willamette Meridian.

II. Background

The Coos Bay District of the BLM is under the direction of the Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and its Record of Decision (ROD) (BLM, 1995). The RMP and its ROD are in conformance with the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the range of the Northern Spotted Owl and its ROD (Northwest Forest Plan [NFP]) (Interagency, 1994). Through these documents, the BLM, in conjunction with other Federal land agencies, is directed to conduct watershed analysis (WA), and to implement restoration projects to aid in the recovery of water quality and aquatic, riparian, and terrestrial habitats.

As stated in the ROD for the NFP, the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) was developed to maintain the ecological health of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems on public lands within the range of Pacific Ocean anadromous fisheries. The Environmental Consequences section of the EA describes the consistency of the Proposed Action alternative with the ACS.

All Federal agencies are charged with managing programs to enhance the recovery of Federally listed endangered and threatened species and their habitats (Section 7(a)(1) of the Endangered Species Act). Implementing the proposed action is expected to benefit numerous Endangered, Threatened, and Candidate species.

III. Finding of No Significant Impact

A careful review of the EA, that I herein adopt, indicates that there would not be a significant impact on the quality of the human environment from the implementation of any of the alternatives. I agree with this conclusion and determined that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared. This determination is based on consideration of the following factors:

1. The proposed activities are not national or regional in scope. The North Coquille DM/CT project includes approximately 1054 acres, located in a portion of the North Fork Coquille 5th field watershed (No. 1710030505), as defined by Regional Ecosystem Office (REO), containing 98,500 acres of BLM and private land. The North Coquille subwatershed includes the Upper North Fork Creek drainage, a Tier 1 watershed.
2. The proposed activities would not have an impact on unique characteristics of the geographic area such as historical or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, Port-Orford Cedar, wild and scenic rivers, or ecological critical areas. The individual project areas within the North Coquille DM/CT project are located at previously disturbed sites, and the silvicultural prescriptions

would help restore the natural physical environment.

3. The effects on the quality of the human environment of the proposed activities are not highly controversial.
4. The possible effects of the proposed activities on the quality of the human environment are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risk.
5. The proposed projects do not establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant effects.
6. There are no significant cumulative effects identified by this assessment. Although there would be removal of vegetation within the Riparian Reserves, potential adverse impacts to the aquatic environment are eliminated or minimized by the implementation of no-harvest buffers along streams.
7. The proposed activities would not affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places, nor would the activities cause a loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
8. The proposed projects would fully comply with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended.

Proposed activities that may affect listed wildlife species within the project area were submitted for consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in accordance with Section 7(A)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 [16 U.S.C. 1536(A)(2) and (A)(4) as amended]. Proposed activities on 27 acres in Unit 41B that may affect the marbled murrelet will be submitted for re-consultation. Implementation of the proposed action will not proceed until a letter of concurrence or biological opinion is received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Proposed activities that may affect listed fish species within the project area will be submitted for consultation with the National Marine Fisheries. Implementation of the proposed action will not proceed until a letter of concurrence or biological opinion is received from the National Marine Fisheries Service.

9. There are no irreversible or irretrievable resource commitments identified by this assessment, except for a minor consumption of fossil fuels for routine operations.
10. The proposed activities would not violate Federal, State, or local laws imposed for the protection of the environment.

SS/M. Elaine Raper _____ Date: **August 20, 2003** _____
M. Elaine Raper
Umpqua Field Manager
Coos Bay District
Bureau of Land Management